

JOB-CENTER HOUSING

Creating Housing Opportunities for California's Workforce
www.JobCenterHousing.com

THE SOLUTION TO CALIFORNIA'S HOUSING CRUNCH:

The Job-Center Housing Coalition is promoting statewide legislative reforms to increase housing supply and affordability in high job-growth areas by removing barriers to housing production. Below is an outline of the policy issues the Job-Center Housing Coalition will be addressing this legislative session:

Developing a Long-Term Housing Plan:

The Problem: Local governments are constitutionally delegated the power to decide land-use and growth policies and state law sets forth their responsibilities to zone land sufficient enough to meet the long-term housing needs of their communities. Yet, the state's housing goals are being regularly undermined by political challenges to local general plans – including citizen-sponsored growth control initiatives, outright repudiation of state housing goals by regional and local governing bodies and failure on the part of some jurisdictions to accept their obligations and zone adequately for residential development. The result is uneven development patterns, profound uncertainty in local housing markets and, ultimately, inadequate supplies of housing, particularly in California's high job-growth areas.

The Solution. Job-Center Housing supports strengthening state law to ensure that every local government plan for and zone all the land that is necessary to meet a 20-year housing need. California's policy leaders should set forth in statute the state's long-term housing objectives based on rational, market-based forecasting and affirm the intent of the constitutional delegation of land-use powers – local self-governance for the benefit of all Californians.

Resolving –Not Litigating –Construction Disputes:

The Problem: California's lawsuit-dependent system of dealing with construction disputes is inefficient and costly for homeowners. An epidemic of class-action lawsuits has led to a collapse in the construction of affordable, land-efficient townhomes and condos because builders and subcontractors can no longer obtain or afford liability insurance on these projects.

The Solution: Job-Center Housing supports dispute resolution alternatives to costly and time-consuming litigation. The coalition is backing legislation to establish a safe, state-certified, ten-year home warranty system providing new homeowners with full coverage on all bona fide construction disputes. By decreasing the reliance on costly, time-consuming litigation, the warranty system will provide consumers full protection and peace of mind, while also reviving California's dormant townhome and condo housing market.

Stemming the Not-In-My-Backyard Tide:

The Problem: The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is an important guideline for local governments to follow in determining how to assess and mitigate the environmental impacts of proposed developments, but it was never intended to be a tool to stop or delay development of any kind. Despite this, however, opponents of new housing frequently file multiple, often meritless, CEQA lawsuits as a means of stalling or killing new housing projects. Even after an area has cleared all environmental requirements, CEQA is often employed as the legal weapon of choice by NIMBY (Not-In-My-Backyard) groups opposed to higher-density, affordable housing developments in existing urban areas.

The Solution: Job-Center Housing is sponsoring legislation to uphold the basic intent of CEQA, while eliminating multiple CEQA “bites at the apple” that NIMBY groups use to stop needed housing in urban, high job-growth areas.

Establishing a Fiscal Footing that Promotes Housing:

The Problem: Twenty years of state fiscal policies have served to diminish local funding for the services and infrastructure needed to accommodate California’s growth. Development approvals have become fiscal sweepstakes as local communities compete for sales-tax-generating development, to the exclusion of needed housing.

The Solution: In 2000, the Legislature and Governor supported the Job-Center Housing concept of providing fiscal incentives for local governments that keep pace with population needs by approving needed housing. The new program, however, is limited to one year. Job-Center Housing seeks to make the program permanent.

Pursuing “In Fill” Housing Opportunities to Maximize Land-use Efficiency:

The Problem: As land in urban areas becomes increasingly scarce, local governments motivated to clean up abandoned or non-economic industrial sites and turn them into housing are often confronted by numerous obstacles that block or delay their progress. So-called “brownfields” offer localities and homebuilders an opportunity to meet a significant portion of their unmet housing needs, while fully maximizing the use of land in the state’s job-centers.

The Solution: Job-Center Housing is currently exploring ideas with other stakeholders aimed at eliminating some of the brownfield development obstacles –including the establishment of reasonable, cost effective “clean up” standards, and fair and certain liability.

Providing Assistance for those Hardest to House:

The Problem: Housing subsidies alone cannot solve California’s housing supply and affordability problems and without cost-saving reforms, precious public funding will benefit fewer needy households. At the same time, however, even the enactment of meaningful, housing-friendly policy reforms cannot entirely close the most severe income gaps that leave many families and individuals struggling to find shelter. Some level of state funding –coupled with responsible housing reforms –is necessary to help close market gaps and assist California’s low and moderate income families find housing they can afford to buy or rent.

The Solution: Job-Center Housing supports a housing strategy that blends public policy reforms with necessary funding to help the state’s hardest to house families and individuals. The state needs to appropriate adequate funding every year to close unavoidable affordability gaps while maximizing the benefits of other housing policy reforms. California policy makers should also consider innovative funding, tax credit and loan-guarantee programs.